

## **Minutes of DAAC Meeting**

### **Call to Order**

Co-Chair Seren Derin called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

### **Attendance**

DAAC members present were Seren Derin, Reginald Andrade, Bernadette Hait, Jim MacRostie, and Joan Rising

Others present were: Tom Davies and Mark Andrews, Amherst College; Carolyn Holstein, DAAC staff liaison, and a member of the public Andy Bristol

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### **Amherst College – Seelye House renovations**

Tom Davies, Director of Design and Construction and Mark Andrews, Capital Projects Manager of Amherst College, presented plans for the proposed renovation of Seelye House dormitory to the DAAC. They did so because the College is asking for two Variances from the State Architectural Access Board (AAB) and needs approval from the Town DAAC in order to do so. The Variance requests are:

1. Not to install an elevator to the top two floors of the dormitory, and have only the first floor fully accessible;
2. To have the two upper floors of bedrooms ambulatory, but with no turning radius for wheelchairs in the upper floor bathrooms.

Mr. Davies said that there are more than 30 dormitories campus-wide, with 73% of the bedrooms accessible in the fully accessible dormitories.

Seelye Hall, located at the corner of South Pleasant Street and Northampton Road, is one of the smallest with just 29 bedrooms. It has not been renovated since 1910. The first floor will be fully accessible except for the stairway to the upstairs. The first floor contains a sun-room, large community room, library, large hallway, vending machine area, two bathrooms, a suite of three bedrooms plus living room and two accessible entrances. Upstairs, the bathrooms have bars, etc, but no turning area for wheelchairs. There are six (6) total bathrooms, two bathrooms on each floor of the building.

Van accessible parking is just outside the back door in a small parking lot for the dorm. The DAAC members said that there may be a need for more than one handicapped parking space next to the dorm. Mr. Davies and Mr. Andrews said that an extra space can be added if the need arises.

Ms. Rising asked if there was a dedicated bathroom for the accessible bedrooms on the first floor. Sharing a bathroom can be taxing and the need for sanitary conditions could be vital, she and other members of the DAAC agreed. Ms. Derin suggested that one of the bathrooms should be reserved for the accessible bedrooms only.

Mr. Davies explained that there are other dormitories on campus that are fully compliant on all floors and have a special dedicated bath for an accessible bedroom. He mentioned the Charles Pratt House, the Morrow Dorm, the Smith House and Valentine Hall as buildings that have arrangements for students with such special needs. Hitchcock Dorm to the north of Seelye is in the process of becoming fully accessible. No Variance from the AAB will be needed for Hitchcock.

Mr. Davies said that the College asks each student if they have special needs before they enter as freshmen. The College can then assign the student to the dorm best suited for them. Seelye Hall, for example, is located off campus, so that few students with special needs would be assigned to that dormitory.

Other details of the Seelye Hall proposed renovations were examined. Mr. Bristol noted that a refrigerator located under a counter may be difficult for a person in a wheelchair to access. Also, power door openers should be installed for both means of egress, not just the front door. The College planners responded that all spaces on the first floor would be ADA compliant.

Mr. Andrews said that the College needs a letter from the DAAC, saying that the Committee looked at the plans and are support the Variance requests. The Committee agreed that they could support the variance requests, given two changes if needed for the students:

1. Additional accessible parking will be added behind Seelye House;
2. One of the bathrooms will be dedicated to a bedroom on the first floor, both being fully accessible.

To that end, Ms. Derin made a motion to support Amherst College's request for Variances from the Architectural Access Board, given the above two recommendations. Ms. Hait seconded the motions, and the vote was unanimous to support the Variance request.

#### **Other Amherst College Access Issues**

The DAAC told the College planners that it's great that the campus is becoming accessible to the students, but the College has events that are open to the general public, and there are several access issues that need to be addressed for the public's sake.

- 1. Buckley Hall** – Ms. Derin stated that the ramp next to the entrance sidewalk by the front door is very bad. It is too steep, too short and curved. It needs to be able to be used by a person in a wheelchair alone, and not require additional assistance. Mr. Davies responded that the ramp is indeed terrible and will be corrected this coming summer.
- 2. HP placards and Police Station** – Ms. Rising told of her misadventure parking with an HP placard in a HP spot on the college campus, only to receive a parking ticket from the campus police. When she tried to visit the police station, she had to struggle up two flights of stairs to the station, and was told that visitors needed special parking placards to park on campus. The DAAC said that the College needed to change:
  - 1)** Their on-campus parking policy for people with HP placards;
  - 2)** The signage for the HP spaces;
  - 3)** The police station must be made accessible;
  - 4)** More accessible parking campus-wide is needed.

Mr. Davies and Mr. Andrews said that they would speak to the campus police and the physical plant director to try to address these multiple problems.

#### **Nest Meeting**

The next meeting of the DAAC will be Tuesday, May 17<sup>th</sup> at **3 PM**, Room 101 of the Bangs Community Center.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carolyn Holstein, staff liaison

Disability Access Advisory Committee  
April 22, 2008  
Room 101, Bangs Community Center